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How Bolshevism was kept out of Europe

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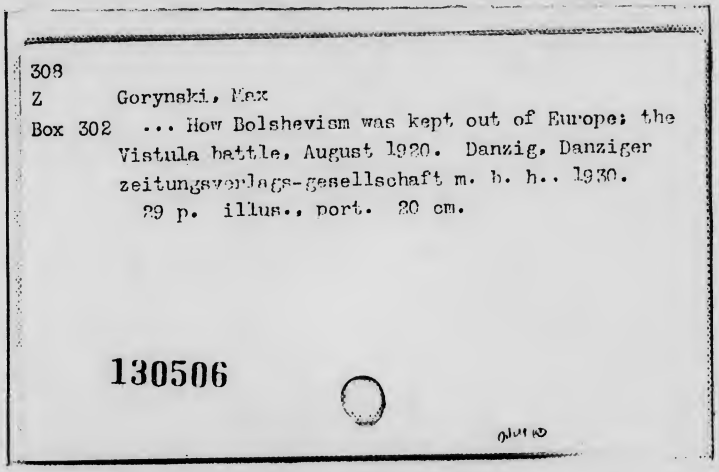
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Max Gorynski

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The Vistula Battle — August 1920

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INTENTIONAL SECOND EXPOSURE

Marshal Joseph Pilsudski

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Drukarnia Gdańska A. G., Danzig, Stadtgebiet 12

Dec. 4, 1930 DA/HEC

A Turning Point in European History.

Ten years ago, on the 12th of October 1920, at Riga, the clauses of a preliminary peace treaty were agreed upon between representatives of Poland and Soviet Russia. Six days later, on the 18th of October, the signal „Cease fire!" was flashed along the 1000 kilometres of the Polish-Russian front. Armistice Day for that part of Europe had come at last. The Polish-Russian war which had gone on, with many dramatic changes, since February 1919, was at an end, only two months after the day when special editions of a Berlin paper spread the false alarm that Warsaw had been taken by the Reds. Poland had made good her claim to live her own life as one of the nations of the West instead of becoming the jumping board for the Bolshevist Revolution in its onslaught on Europe. By saving herself from the grip of Red Imperialism Poland had saved Western Civilization.

It is not necessary to dwell upon such questions as what would have happened to Poland and to Central Europe if the Battle of the Vistula had gone against the Poles. Under the term „Battle of the Vistula" Polish military writers comprise all the events in the field from the 2nd of August, when the Reds took Brest on Bug,

to the 26th of August, when the Polish Army in pursuit of the beaten enemy again reached the river Bug from which it had fallen back only a fortnight before. Foreign military writers restrict the term to the fighting before Warsaw itself, that is to say to the days between August 13th and August 18th. Writing of those days, in an article published by the Polish press on the 17th of August last, Lord D'Abernon said that the fall of Warsaw would have meant a turning point in the history of Europe, as Europe then could have hardly resisted Communist propadanda and Soviet invasion. Thus the battle of Warsaw, as also its sequel, the battles on the Niemen and Stchara rivers by which Moscow was forced to recognize Poland's independence, must be ranged with the decisive battles in the destinies of Central Europe. Had the Soviet armies not have been defeated, the western frontier of Bolshevist ruins would to-day probably run along the Elbe or even along the Rhine.

The tremendous import of the Vistula battle is by now almost generally recognized by English, American and French military and political writers. Yet there are many material and personal aspects of this battle and of the whole Polish-Russian war which call for elucidation as at the critical time they were pushed in the background by events that appeared more important to western opinion, or obscured by misleading statements of Soviet propagandists and other interested parties. Erroneous opinions are still held as to the origin of the Polish-Russian conflict itself; its several phases are not presented in the right order; and it is not properly understood who it was who brought about the turn that decided the fates of half a continent.

The Origins of the Polish-Russian War.

Since it captured power in Russia to the present moment Bolshevism proclaims its main object to be the world-wide „export of Revolution". With the rebirth of the independent Poland the Polish-Russian war was born as the first campaign of Bolshevism in its intended war for the conquest of the world. On the 13th of November 1918 the Pan-Russian Executive Committee declared void the Peace Treaty of Brest, annulled the cession of any territory of the former Tsarist Empire, and called upon the populations of those vast, ethnographically non-Russian countries which in this way were claimed again as parts of Russia, to join „in brotherly alliance" the labourers and peasants of Russia, promising them assistance in their fight for introducing the Soviet system. And in order not to leave any doubt as to the Bolshevist interpretation of „selfdetermination of the peoples", on the 18th of November, Trotzky, the then president of the Supreme Soviet War Council, in a speech to a delegates meeting at Voronezh, gave out the slogan of carrying Revolution forward into the West by the force of arms. „Through Kiev leads our way for joining forces with the Austrian and Hungarian revolution, and through Pskov and Vilna our way for joining the German revolution. Offensive on every front! Offensive on the western front! Offensive on the southern front! Offensive an all revolutionary fronts!"

At the moment of this incendiary speech the Red Armies were already on the move. In the Polish-Russian war of 1919-1920 Moscow was the aggressor. By prearrangement with the German occupation troops

the Red detachements were closely following the German garrisons as they were being withdrawn from the territories to the east of Poland. General Max Hofmann of Brest Litovsk fame, the commander responsible for the German retreat from the European East, had conceived the idea that Poland be smothered, in the interest of Prussia, by the flood of Bolshevism before the renascent nation should acquire any force of resistance. He did not care what further happened to Germany or to Europe with the Reds as next-door neighbours, if only Prussia would not have, for the first, to give up her spoils of the Polish partitions. Only in the first days of February 1919, when the victorious Allies took alarm at the spread of Bolshewism to the West and exerted sufficient pressure in Berlin, Germany acquiesced to arrange the final retreat in such manner as to allow Polish troops to march into the positions given up by the German forces. Meanwhile, however, Soviet vanguards had reached the Niemen line. On February 9th and 14th the first Polish detachments marched into the narrow strip of territory still held by the Germans, the Soviet advanced detachments retreated without any serious resistance, and when the Poles occupied the Niemen line they at once came into fighting contact with Soviet troops which had Vilna, Baranovicze and Pinsk as their bases.

Thus, the Polish-Russian War, a conception of General Max Hoffmann's, started in February 1919, and not in April 1920 with Marshal Piłsudski's march upon Kiev. All the world over the Kiev expedition was played out by Communist propaganda against „militarist and imperialist" Poland. The effect of this propaganda was

that, in July and August 1920, the Labour Parties in Germany, Austria, Czekhoslovakia, Danzig prevented transports of war materials from the West to Poland at a time when such assistance was sorely needed for warding off the Reds from Central Europe. But let us proceed with our narrative without anticipating events. By the end of 1919 the Poles, by a series of bold operations carried through with feeble and badly equipped forces, succeeded to throw the Soviet troops as far back as the rivers Düna in the North, the Beresina in the East, and the Dniester in the South, to the point where it receives its affluent the Smotrycz, this line being, on the average, about one hundred miles farther out to the East than the present Polish-Russian frontier.

Pilsudski's Strategy and Politics.

This advance for the liberation of Polish territory from the Bolshevist invasion was effected while the Polish Army was still in the making. It must be remembered that the only armed force representative of Polish independence at the outbreak of the World War were the Polish Legions, formed and drilled as Rifle Clubs by Joseph Pilsudski in the then Austrian part of Poland, since 1908 already, in prevision of an Austro-Russian conflict in a near future. After many feats of arms the Pilsudski Legions had been disbanded by the Germans, the officiers and Pilsudski himself arrested (July 1917) when officers and soldiers refused to swear fealty to the two kaisers. But already another Polish Military Organization, the Polska Organizacja Wojskowa (P. O. W.), secretly formed by Pilsudski

since October 1914, in anticipation of necessities clearly foreseen by this man's uncannily exact readings of the future, was active behind the German lines in the East. At Pilsudski's return from Magdeburg, in November 1918, and his taking over of supreme power as Chief of the State, the Legions, the P. O. W. and the Polish regiments returning from the Austro - Italian front, altogether about 30 000 men, formed the war-seasoned nucleus of a Polish Army. By energetically pushing forward the work of organisation a total of 147 000 men and 8 800 officiers was reached at the end of February 1919; they were exclusively volunteer troops. Conscription was resorted to since March 1919 after it had been voted by the Constituent Assembly; by the end of the year the totals of the army were 21 divisions of foot and 7 brigades of horse, with effectives of about 600 000 men at the depots and on the fighting fronts. The troops which in February 1919 were opoosed to the Soviet advance were no more than 12 battalions, 12 squadrons and 3 batteries.

By unavoidable destiny the first task of the young Polish Army was cut out in fixing the frontiers of the re-born State. Though in point 13 of his speech of January 18th, 1918, President Wilson had sketched out what he considered a just delimitation of an independent Polish State, the international situation was such that a rather restrictive interpretation of this statement found favour with influential members of the Peace Conference. After the Russian Revolution of March 1917, and even after its Bolshevist aggravation in November of the same year, London and Paris were still indulging in speculations on the return of Tsarism. The Treaty of

Versailles left the problem of the Polish frontiers to the East open for further discussion. The statesmen of the West had, indeed, no correct ideas as to the seriousness and imminence of the Bolshevist menace; they also imagined that one or the other of the counter-revolutionary partisans who were fighting in Russia, Koltchak, Youdenitch, Denikin, might pull it off, and while chary with assistance to Poland, they were lavishing money and war materials on the „White" generals, even sending out troops to co-operate with them. The final outcome of such ill-considered policy was that after the Whites were defeated the Reds could use those western stores against Poland. Yet as long as they had to fight counter-revolutionary troops at home, and also the non-Bolshevist Republic of the Ukrainian People, the Soviets had to postpone their attack in force against Poland, and their troops on the Polish front did not, by the end of January 1919, exceed the equivalent of 8 divisions. But by the end of March, with the good progress of the Bolshevists against the Whites, this total was brought up to 25 divisions, and in August 1920 it reached 39 divisions.

Three objectives were in the mind of Marshal Pilsudski when he was pushing forward to the East his newly formed battalions of raw volunteers and conscripts whose equipment was very far from western standards, so far indeed that about 20 per cent of the men had no boots. First of all security had to be won for the work of organizing the new State, and for this purpose the sphere of direct Moscow influence must be thrown back as far as possible. Secondly, it was advisable to have between Poland and Soviet Russia a series of friendly

disposed nations to whom the Bolshevist system would not appeal. Finland, Esthonia, and with some military assistance from Poland, Latvia also had already won their independence; the peasant populations of White-Ruthenia and of the Ukraine, the two countries crossed by the Polish front, were deeply adverse to Bolshevism. If it were possible to establish states of their own for these peoples struggling against the red Tsars of Moscow, then indeed the European safety barrier between the Baltic and the Black Sea would have acquired a much wider territorial basis than Poland by herself could provide. Thirdly, it was essential to oppose accomplished facts to the ill-considered ideas of western statesmen and politicians; they still cherished the illusion that by restricting Poland within the former eastern frontiers of the so-called Congress Kingdom (the Russian Poland of pre-war times), leaving several millions of undoubtedly Polish populations outside the national State, they would create a viable organism, strong enough to withstand constant pressure from the East.

Considering the declaration of revolutionary war launched by Moscow against Central and Western Europe it was clear that none of these objects could be attained without fight against the concentrated Soviet forces. Since November 1918 Marshal Pilsudski, though struggling with many other problems of no less importance, was preparing for this decisive battle, and with his usual foresight and energy he was endeavouring to have it fought out at his own time and on a ground of his own choosing.

The Kiev Campaign and its Aftermath.

The Marshal had stopped the Polish push to the East some distance in advance of the former German trenches. This was not only a strategical position of some advantage — though, of course, it could not be maintained on the German system, Poland having neither men nor materials enough for trench war — but also included to the north of the Pripet river sufficient territory for the eventual establishment of a non-Bolshevist White-Ruthenian State. To the south of that river the Republic of the Ukrainian People, assailed a the same time by the Reds and by the Whites (general Denikin) was fighting a losing battle. General Petlura with a remnant of his troops had been driven into Polish territory; only a few bands of Ukrainian partisans were still in the field. In March 1920 General Petlura concluded an alliance with Poland; on April 25th a Polish expedition headed by the Marshal in person, followed by a few Ukrainian troops, attacked the Soviet lines in Volhynia and Podolia, occupied within a fortnight all the territory to the west of the Dnieper, and on the 9th of May entered Kiev.

This Kiev campaign was the outcome of political ideas based on the chance of establishing a non-Bolshevist Ukrainian Republic, but also of military considerations. We have mentioned already the rapid massing of Soviet troops on the Polish front going on since January. This of course pointed to the near beginning of offensive Soviet action on this front. Moscow, it is true, had advanced peace proposals; but M. Tchitcherine's notes were in flagrant contrast with

Trotzky's speeches who still demanded the destruction of „bourgeois" Poland, and it was clear that the proposals were made for the sake of Communist propaganda abroad. Informations gathered by the Polish intelligence service made it highly probable that the Russian main attack would start from the Ukraine, and Marshal Piłsudski resolved to forestall his adversary and to disarrange his plans. A few days before the march upon Kiev began it become, however, evident that the previous intelligences had been misleading, and preparations for a Soviet offensive on a grand scale were really going on in the North, in the Düna-Beresina sector. Preparations for the Kiev expedition were too far advanced to have the direction of the Polish preventive action reversed; but as soon as Kiev was occupied measures were taken in the northern sector, the opening of a Polish offensive there being fixed for the 17th of May. General Toukhatchevsky, the commander of the Red troops north of the Pripet, was, however, beforehand and started operations on the 14ht.

After good initial success the Russian envelopping movement on the Polish left flank was brought to a halt, and by the 8th of June the Poles had even succeeded to throw back the Russians and to straighten out their front. General Toukhatechevsky's offensive hat started with over 6 divisions of infantery and one cavalry division against 3 Polish foot divisions and one bridage of horse in the section attacked. In order to restore the front the Poles had to put in all the reserves of the northern sector and also to bring up one division from the South. Though still disposing of double the strength of his adversary, General Toukhatchevsky interrupted

operations and waited for developments in the southern sector.

In the South, on the Ukrainian and Volhynian scenes of war, a rapid change to the disadvantage of the Poles produced itself when General Budienny at the head of an army of 12 000 horse with 300 machineguns and 50 cannons broke, on the 5th of June, through the Polish lines and successfully raided centres of Polish military organization far in the rear. The Poles were forced to retreat from Kiev, to give up the Ukraine and even part of South-Eastern Poland, but notwithstanding the loss of so much more territory than they had gained in April and May, they offered good resistance up to the time of the siege of Warsaw and during the Vistula battle.

Meanwhile the forces under General Toukhatchevsky had been brought up to a fighting strength of over 200 000 men with plentiful material — much of it French and English supplies to Youdenitch and Denikin, the White generals beaten by Moscow.— while the Polish commander on the northern front, General Szeptycki, disposed of about 125000 men of poor equipment. On the 4th of July a new Soviet offensive started; the order to the Red troops said: „In the West the destinies of World Revolution will be decided. Over the corpse of Poland our way goes towards world-wide conflagration. On Vilna, Minsk, Warsaw forward!" Hopelessly outnumbered, developped on a front of over 300 kilometres, (about 185 miles), constantly menaced with outflanking from the North, the Polish troop began to give way, first on the Düna, later on on the whole front north of the Pripet region. After a short defence of the old German trenches,

then on the Niemen—Shtchara line, they were in a month's time driven back to the Bug line, a distance of about 450 kilometres (about 290 miles). The Polish commanding generals, with experiences of the World War on their minds, had been trying to apply the cordon system under completely different conditions, and they seem never to have thought of the possibilities of manoeuvring war, which were still left to them, as Marshal Pilsudski was to teach them a few weeks later.

Marshal Pilsudski's Manoeuvering Plans.

At the very moment when the Reds stood on the farther bank of the Bug; when Moscow was confident that „bourgeois" Poland was shattered and the way open to the West; when Communists and even Socialists in Europe exulted over Poland's punishment for her „wanton attack on Free Russia"; when the Conference of Spaa was dictating to Poland conditions preposterously incompatible with the security of Europe itself, and for the acceptance of such conditions was promising assistance from the West, quite problematic assistance in view of the foolish attitude of the European Labour Parties; when General Toukhatchevsky was already fixing the day for entering Warsaw with a Communist Polish government ready made in Moscow — at this very moment Marshal Pilsudski's plans for stopping the victorious Soviet advance were shaping already. For he saw and knew that Poland was not yet lost.

The military disasters of the first weeks of the Russian offensive had shaken up Polish patriotism. The military operations of the first year of war had only met

with a languid interest of the Polish people. The fighting lines were so far off, and home politics were so near. Only the very few were capable to take in the deep purport of the Marschal's policy; there were, however, such who raised a cry against „militarism foreign to Polish traditions", though well knowing that without asserting herself Poland, in the then international situation, could not by any means come into her rights. The approach of Red Imperialism claiming the inheritance of the White Tsars opened at last the eyes even of the most obstinate believers into the friendly dispositions of the new Russia towards Poland. Party strife, the traditional evil of the country, ceased for a while. An all-parties Government of National Defence was formed. Its appeals to the national community found a ready response. Over 100 000 volounteers were enlisted, youths of all classes and conditions in life, and they brought with them a new spirit of determination. Under the impulse of the Marshal, the War Ministry, with General Sosnkowski as its chief, was working ahead day and night. The totals of men available grew rapidly; the numbers in depots and at the front were by the middle of August about 900 000; they rose to about 1 200 000 before the end of the war. 73 new batteries of artillery, 1000 machineguns were put into the field. The old fortress of Modlin and Warsaw itself were transformed into fortified camps of great strength, the civilian populations, even women willingly coming forward for throwing up the trenches. In the peasantry the old traditions of Kosciuszko's scythe-men revived. As always in times of greatest national stress in Polish history, Polish women were to the fore in all sort of work for the defence of the country.

Marshal Pilsudski wanted the Bug line to be held long enough to allow him time for forming a strong manoeuvring group which from the upper course of this river would strike at the very insufficiently covered left flank of the enemy. For this end he ordered some preliminary operations to be carried out in the southern sector, principally for making safe against interference from Budienny's cavalry with his own plans. These operations were in good progress when Brest on the Bug (formerly Brest Litowsk) which was very important to the Marschal's scheme, was lost, on August 1st, to the Russians, and the Poles had to retreat to the left bank of the river. Then it was that the Marshal worked out a modification of his intended manoeuvre into the Russian flank and rear. He carried it through to a full success against a strong current of diverging opinions of his own General Staff.

General Weygand, Marshal Foch' rigt-hand man, had come to Warsaw on the 25th of July. He advised to defend the Vistula line while preparing a counter-offensive from behind of this powerful river against the right (north) flank of the enemy; in the southern sector the Poles were eventually to fall back as far as the river San. The Polish generals were for starting a counter-offensive based on Modlin, to the north-west of Warsaw, being under the impression that the Soviet general would, as Marshal Paskevitch did in 1831 with much help from the Prussians, force the Vistula below Modlin and take Warsaw from the West. Some colour was lent to this supposition by the pressure strong Soviet forces were already exerting against the Polish position on the Narew, the big northern affluent of the Bug. Their

breaking through in this region was fraught with the double danger of a cuttig-off of communications with Danzig — whence French munition transports were still, though in vain, expected to come through — and of the Russians gaining the left Vistula bank. In the course of events the two dangers materialized in fact and caused much local disarrangement in the execution of Marshal Pilsudski's scheme.

Having heard all conflicting opinions and spoken himself very little, the Marshal decided to go on with his own plans. He gave some more strength than he originally intended to the army group north of Warsaw, which resulted in his own manoeuvring group becoming as much weaker. His decision was based on a correct reading of the adversary's psychology. Having seen the Poles retreat before him for so many weeks, General Toukhatchevsky must be flushed with victory; in his opinion — such was the Marshal's reading of the young Russian general's mind — the Poles had no fighting spirit left and no nerve for initiative; they were definitively beaten, and not worth the waste of too much strategic art; he would therefore try to take Warsaw by frontal attack. The Marshal's conclusion for his own part was to confide in the stamina of the Polish soldier that he would withstand this attack for several days and draw the Soviet troops into a series of battles for the possession of the lines on the right Vistula bank before the Warsaw bridgehead. This would give the manoeuvring group sufficient time to assemble, to sally forth and to break the weak cover, two divisions in all, of the enemy's left wing and to fall down with a heavy blow on his rears.

In order to fill in this rough frame of the Marshal's scheme, which the French strategist General Camon, has since qualified as a „Napoleonic manoeuvre into the adversary's flank and rear", several problems in space and time had to be solved. First of all it was essential that the Modlin and Warsaw fortified camps be put into first rate defensive condition, and that could not be achieved before the 12th of August. Secondly the troops on the left (western) bank of the Bug had to hold out there a couple of days, then to go back into an intermediate position, hold out another couple of days, and only then fall back on the prepared positions. But they had not only twice to break fighting contact; quite a substantial part of those forces had to detach itself altogether from the enemy and march up to the South, to the river Wieprz, another affluent of the Vistula and roughly parallel to the Bug. In the Wieprz region the manoeuvring group was to be formed out of troops from the Bug, some others from the southern sector and some fresh troops from the depots in the interior of the country. The forming of this group could not be ready before the 15th of August, the next day, or still better the next but one, being the date for starting the intended thrust into the flank of the enemy. Thus the troops before Warsaw must hold out to the 18th of August at least, as the effect of the manoeuvre on the besieger could not make itself felt before it had gone on for 24 hours. Of the troops coming down from the Wieprz towards Warsaw it was expected that they would march a distance of 80 kilometres (50 miles) in two days.

An ordre de bataille covering all the details was worked out by the Marshal in the small hours of the 7th

of August. The following night already the Polish troops on the Bug fell back on the intermediate positions, before daybreak of the 12th of August they were in the Warsaw and Modlin camps just made ready to receive them. In the centre the regrouping of the forces was effected smoothly without any hitch. But on the north

Types of Russian war prisoners, Poland 1920

wing the force covering the movement gave way under pressure of a flanking manoeuvre of the Reds, and the group which was still to be newly formed behind the Narew river had to proceed with its formation farther to the West, behind the Wkra river. This local shortcoming made possible a Russian cavalry raid into some districts of Polish Pomerania, and also the western advance of a Russian army which crossed the Vistula near Plock; this hampered later on the cutting-off of the

Russian retreat, but it did not interfere with the immediate effects of Pilsudski's manoeuvre. The troops from the southern sector directed to the rallying spot on the Wieprz detached themselves from the enemy after stiff fighting only and had to do much forced marching. On the whole the preliminaries of the intended action were gone through quite satisfactorily, and the massing of the strong attacking group which, after so many weeks, was to snatch initiative out of the hands of the Red commander, escaped the attention of the Russians.

The Soviet troops in Poland still totalled, on the 11th of August, 173 000 men, of which 102 700 operated in the north sector. The numbers of the Polish troops engaged were 190 500, of these 144 500 were massed in the north sector. Out of these 56 300 foot and 6 450 horse under Marshal Pilsudski's command, with 1000 machineguns und 270 cannons, formed the manoeuvring group. It was for the first time during the whole Polish-Russian War that a marked superiority of Polish numbers had been assembled on the decisive spot.

Fighting before Warsaw and on the Wkra.

On the 13th of August two Soviet armies opened their attack on the Warsaw bridgehead, one from the North, another one from the East. The Poles stand firm everywhere, except at the townlet of Radzymin (right Vistula bank, 23 kilometres from Warsaw) which is occupied by the Russians. Retaken by the Poles the next day (14th August) at noon, the place ist again lost, and on two points the enemy breaks even into the second line of defence, at a distance of only 13 kilo-

metres from the Vistula bridge. This was the hardest moment of the fight, and General Haller, commander of the Warsaw-Wkra section, orders General Sikorski to attack on the Wkra in order to ease the situation before Warsaw. The Marshal is urged by telephone to begin operations on the 15th already, but he agrees only to advance his manoeuvre by one day, that is to say to start on the 16th instead on the 17th.

On the 15th of August a Polish division supported by armoured cars retakes once more Radzymin, but the Russians succeed a third time to occupy part of the townlet. Only the next day (16th) the Poles recover completely their first line of defence after very stiff fighting. The south wing of the Poles before Warsaw has to repulse several attacks, and repeated sallies are undertaken from the lines in order to bind the attacker and to prevent any attempts of his at a re-grouping the moment he feels effects of the Marshal's flanking manoeuvre. For, of course, it was already known at the Polish General Staff that the operation from the Wieprz had gathered great impetus almost from the very start. Thus, on the 16th of August the relief of Warsaw could be considered as virtually achieved.

On the 14th of August General Sikorski, urged on by General Haller, had attacked two Russian armies which had come over the Narew, although his own concentration was not yet quite finished. The 14th, 15th and 16th were here days of very hard fighting which only on the last day resulted in a decisive throwing back of the adversary. The 18th Polish infantry division, formerly one of General Haller's divisions formed in France, took a most brilliant part in these fights. On the

17th the Russians were here in a disorderly retreat with a general direction towards the East.

Lightning Effects of Pilsudski's Manoeuvre.

At 4 a. m. on the 16th of August the three groups of Marshal Pilsudski's manoeuvring force set out from the Wieprz region. One group under General Skierski had orders to reach next day the high road Warsaw-Brest on Bug. General Skierski surprises one division of the Russian Mozyrz group — this group formed the only cover of Toukhatchevsky's left flank — on its march along the Wieprz towards the Vistula where the Russians wanted to establish a crossing. The division was completely routed and taken prisoners with bag and baggage.

The two other groups, an attacking group proper under General Rydz-Smigly, and an observation corps under General Zielinski, throw over the second division of the Russian Mozyrz group, which takes flight to the East. Thus, the success of this first day is that the left flank of the Soviet armies before Warsaw is completely uncovered, as it were, suspended in mid-air, and that the road is now quitte open for the Marshal.

He is using his opportunity to the best by pressing forward all the next day at such a pace that one of his groups reaches the Warsaw-Brest high road late in the afternoon and joins hands with a division that comes from Warsaw in hot pursuit already of receding Russian forces. At Kolbiel two Russian division are surprised on their retreat; 10 000 prisoners and 40 cannons fall into the hands of the Poles.

On the 17th one Polish division is at Biala Podlaska, the next day another one at Brest on the Bug. In two days the manoeuvring group has marched 80 kilometres (50 miles), in three days its front has developped between Minsk Mazowiecki and Brest, a distance of 150 kilometres (about 95 miles). Those were no empty words in Marshal Piłsudski's order on the 12th of August when he told his men that „the legs and the gallantry of the Polish foot soldier must win this battle".

On the 18th of August the manoeuvre for the relief of Warsaw was actually ended, but also the gains of the whole campaign lost for Moscow. This side of the Bug no Soviet army dared remain, and the will of the Marshal had to decide what further use he would make of his adversary's crushing defeat. The evening of August 17th saw the two Russian armies which had attacked Warsaw on their hasty and disorderly retreat; the armies that had advanced farther to the North and West were abandonned to their fate. It was fulfilled in a few days. Until the 25th those troops were either made prisoners or pushed over the East Prussian frontier. Statements concerning the numbers of Red troops disarmed in East Prussia differ; General Weygand mentions vaguely anything between 50 000 and 100 000; other military writers speak of 30 000. The pursuit of the beaten enemy, which began on the 18th, was ended on the 25th when the remnants of the Russian armies were again on the other side of the Niemen-Bug line whence they had come only one month ago. The numbers of Polish trophies are officially stated as follows: 65 000 prisoners, 231 cannons, 1 023

machineguns, over 200 field kitchens, 10 000 waggons of munitions and technical materials, a great number of motor lorries, motor cars and armoured cars. The total losses of Toukhatchevsky's armies since the beginning of his July offensive are not overestimated at 150 000 men; he lost also more than half of his materials and guns.

The Russian commander had allowed himself to be taken quite unaware by Pilsudski's thrust into his flank. This is the more remarkable as it is admitted by General Toukhatchevsky and also confirmed by the Marshal that a copy of the Marshal's ordre de bataille was intercepted; but General Toukhatchevsky would not believe its purport. He asserts that he expected co-operation from General Budienny's army which had been actually put under his command but was loath to give up the idea of taking Lemberg. On August 17th before noon General Toukahtchevsky had positive news of Pilsudski's march and of the disaster of his own Mozyrz group; yet bis orders for a regrouping were not ready before 6:30 p. m., and bis troops farthest in Poland were for two days cut off from communication with him, and when at last communication was restored for a short while they would not believe that their situation was anything but „extremely favourable".

„A Polish Victory and a Polish Plan."

The battle of the Vistula became, almost immediately after it was fought and won, the object of curious controversy. The victory won by the Marshal did not suit the book of his political opponents. They

gave it therefore out that the Marshal had been only the arm, but General Weygand the brains that shattered the Reds before Warsaw. A Russian writer in the service of German propaganda went even one better by telling German and English readers that the Soviet armies were beaten off by French officers operating machineguns.

The best rejoinder to such stories is General Weygand's loyal statement in an interview with a French journalist that it was „a Polish plan and a Polish victory". General Faury (a colonel in 1920), member of the French military mission in Poland, is also emphatic on this point. So are Ambassador Jusserand, in 1920 chief of the French, and Lord D'Abernon, chief of the British diplomatic mission in Poland. In an article he wrote for the Polish press Lord D'Abernon says that the situation in Poland was such that „only a national hero could work the miracle" of inspiring the army with the will to conquer, only Pilsudski had sufficient authority, and he only is to be thanked for the realization of the miracle, Lord D'Abernon, while promising that he would publish some day his recollections of the critical period in Warshaw, telis the Polish publicists that it is their duty to explain to the European public opinion that in 1920 Europe was saved by Poland, and that a strong Poland in harmonious relations with western European civilization is a necessity, because Poland is the defensive wall against the permanent danger of Asiatic invasion.

All arguments as to the authorship of the decisive manoeuvre for the relief of Warsaw are clenched by the fact that in the last days of July when the Reds

had reached the Bug line, Marshal Pilsudski was already starting an analogous operation from the upper course of this river, had to stop it because of a changed situation, but could resume it and conduct it to a glorious success from another point of sally.

The Battle of the Niemen ends the War.

The battle of the Vistula has elicited much military and political writings, while its sequel, the battles of the Niemen and Shtchara still remain in the background. Yet in the opinion of General Faury those two battles are even more important from a military and political view point than the Vistula battle. General Faury is certainly right. Niemen and Shtchara were the knocking-out blows which were indispensable for putting an end to the first, and until now, the last Soviet attempt at „exporting Revolution" into Central and Western Europe. They were also indispensable for enforcing peace on the Red Tsars of Moscow and making them agree to a Polish-Russian frontier that gives Poland a minimum of security towards the East. Last but not least they were indispensable for thwarting by an accomplished fact those western statesmen and diplomats to whom a small and weakling state at the most exposed frontier of European civilization did not seem as clever an idea as the putting out of a burning volcano with a sprinkler. Marshal Pilsudski himself was, of course, very far from considering his victory on the Vistula as the finish of Poland's struggle with Moscow. Here again he found himself at variance with many advisers. When leaving Warsaw on the 27th of

August, General Weygand expressed his hopes that the Polish army would not be drawn too far away in pursuit, and he wound up with the remark that this might give rise to regrettable misunderstandings between Poland and the Allied Nations.

Political and military considerations were too imperious as to allow Marshal Pilsudski to take the hint. A small and weak Polish State would have been doomed by his geographical position to become the mere playball of international intrigue, a burden to the European peace, a constant enticement to imperialist appetites, revolutionary or reactionary, of its neighbours. Only a strong and viable Poland can fulfil the task mentioned by Lord D'Abernon of being a warden of peace in the East and North-East of Europe.

From the military point of view the situation was made clear by the Soviets still behaving as if they did not know that they were beaten. In the region Grodno-Vilna-Baranowicze General Toukhatchevsky was reforming his armies. Reinforcements of about 60 000 men with plentiful materials were already on the spot when the fugitives from the Vistula crossed the Bug. The Polish peace delegation which on the eve of the great battle had reached the quarters of the Russian commander-in-chief Kamieniew was still treated to unacceptable proposals. Thus, Marshal Pilsudski gave his troops only the shortest time for catching breath. Before the end of August the situation in the southern sector of the Polish war theatre was cleared up by severe blows dealt to Budienny's cavalry corps which after heavy losses had to retire to the North-East. The main engagement was fought near Zamosc where the

13th infantry division, formerly of the Haller Army which had come from France, gave proof of its high value. For the first time since the opening days of the World War real cavalry battles were fought on this occassion. In September the last Red troops were beaten out of South-Eastern Poland.

But the Niemen-Stchara line was the scene of the main operations. They were conducted with lightning rapidity, as a war of hard marching, manoeuvring and shocks. Action on the Niemen began on the 19th of September, on the 26th Grodno was taken after strong resistance. Another Polish army crossed the Niemen at Druskieniki, pushed back the Lithunians who in the heyday of Russian success had broken their neutrality, and started outflanking the Russian right wing. A third army advanced from the Pripet region. Under the menace of complete envelopment the Russians retired to the Stchara river which, however, was soon forced by the Poles. On the 26th the Russians were heavily beaten ad Lida, the same day before nightfall, one hundred kilometres to the south of Lida, Slonim on the Stchara, on the high road to Baranovicze, was taken. Within the fortnight of a campaign conducted by Pilsudski at a furious pace, the Russians lost 50 000 prisoners, 160 cannons, 1000 machineguns, 18 armoured cars, 7 armoured trains, 3 aeroplans, 21 locomotives, 2540 railway cars. And then, on September 29th, a ruthless pursuit set in which was continued for 20 days, until the signing of the armistice. On that day two of General Toukhatchevsky's four armies had practically ceased to exist, the two others were in panic flight after enormous losses. There was practically no

Russian front to „cease fire", and Russia was incapable to bring into the field a new army within reasonable time.

When the pursuit of the beaten Red armies began, peace and armistice negotiations which in the meantime had been transferred to Riga, entered, at last, a more promising phase. In their demands the Polish delegates confined themselves to territories where there were still substantial Polish interests left notwithstanding of a century of Russian persecutions, where Polish culture was still firmly rooted in the soil; but they insisted on the restitution of those national treasures, art collections, libraries, military trophies and other objects of historical value of which Poland had been systematically robbed at the time of her dismemberment and also after 1831 and after 1863. On the whole the Polish peace conditions were so moderate that the chief of the Russian delegation, the late Joffe, could speak of a peace treaty „without victors or vanquished". For the spirit in which Poland is keeping her peace with Moscow nothing is more characteristic than the fact for the official celebration of the tenth anniversary of liberating Poland from the Bolshevist invasion the Polish Government did not fix the day of the Vistula battle, but intended originally to hold commemorations on the 18th of October, the day of armistice with Russia. Finally it was decided to celebrate this Armistice Day on the 11th of November, which is Independence Day for Poland, and also Armistice Day in the West. Thus, the tenth anniversary of the Battle of the Vistula will be celebrated in Poland as a Day of Peace.

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